GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1981
ANSWERED ON:29.11.2002
IMPACT OF WTO AGREEMENTS ON INDIAN FARMERS
A. VENKATESH NAIK;ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a general opinion that the WTO agreements on agriculture had not done justice to Indian farmers;

(b) if so, the Government`s reaction thereto; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to safeguard the interest of farmers and to build a lobby of like minded nations to face up the developed countries in the re-negotiation round of the WTO?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY)
(a) to (c) : The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which came into effect on 1 January 1995, aims to establish a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system and provides rules and disciplines on support and protection. India`s domestic policy options for agricultural and rural development have not been constrained by the commitments undertaken under the AoA. However, the experience of implementation of the AoA has brought out some asymmetries and imbalances in the provisions of the AoA. These have been highlighted by India in the proposals presented to the WTO in the on-going negotiations in agriculture. The proposals generally address the need to safeguard the interests of our agricultural production and farmers during the negotiations by, inter alia, providing appropriate levels of tariff protection on imports and taking into account the food security and livelihood concerns of developing countries like India, and through increased market access for agricultural products of export interests to us.
In order to ensure that Indian farmers are not put to any hardship, the Government have put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the imports of sensitive items and are committed to providing adequate protection to domestic producers through WTO compatible measures, including appropriate calibration of applied tariffs within bound levels, and imposition of anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard action under specified circumstances as necessary.
India is also engaged in building broad coalitions with WTO Members to achieve its objectives.